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INFO AMEMBASSY NAIROBI  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KHARTOUM 02104

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SUBJECT: BASHIR AND THE RCC ON THE EVE OF THEIR SECOND  
ANNIVERSARY

11. CONFIDENTIAL - ENTIRE TEXT.

12. SUMMARY: BESEIGED AND CRITICIZED FROM VIRTUALLY EVERY QUARTER, AS IT APPROACHES ITS SECOND ANNIVERSARY, GENERAL OMAR AL-BASHIR'S REVOLUTION COMMAND COUNCIL NONETHELESS APPEARS FIRMLY IN CHARGE OF SUDAN. THE RECENT CURRENCY CHANGE, ABOUT AS BADLY BOTCHED AS ANYTHING THE GOS HAS DONE, REVEALED A POPULATION TOTALLY COWED. THE OPPOSITION REMAINS FRAGMENTED AND UNORGANIZED AND MOST POTENTIAL LEADERSHIP IS OUTSIDE TRY. CONFLICT CONTINUES WITHIN THE RCC WITH SOME MEMBERS MORE INFLUENTIAL THAN OTHERS, BUT BASHIR HIMSELF IS PROBABLY STILL FIRST AMONG EQUALS. THE NATIONAL ISLAMIC FRONT EFFECTIVELY CONTROLS INTERNAL SECURITY, THE ECONOMY, AND THE MEDIA, HENCE CONSIDERABLE POLITICAL POWER, BUT NIF HEAD HASSAN AL TURABI AND BASHIR SHARE A COMMUNITY OF INTERESTS GIVING THE IMPRESSION OF PERVASIVE NIF INFLUENCE WHICH MAY NOT BE AS ABSOLUTE AS IT APPEARS. UNLESS AND UNTIL THOSE INTERESTS DIVERGE IT WILL REMAIN DIFFICULT TO ASCERTAIN WHO WIELDS GREATER POWER. END SUMMARY.

13. DESPITE INCREASING CRITICISM FROM EVERY QUARTER EXCEPT THE NATIONAL ISLAMIC FRONT, GENERAL OMAR AL BASHIR'S GOVERNMENT APPEARS STRONGER THEN EVER. IN THE WAKE OF THE GULF WAR AND WITH A TOTALLY BANKRUPT ECONOMY, THE RCC SHOULD BE ON THE DEFENSIVE, BUT IT IS NOT. ANY DOUBTS ABOUT THE REGIME'S RESILIENCE, HAVE BEEN DISPELLED BY THE RECENT CURRENCY CHANGE. ALTHOUGH BADLY EXECUTED, THE GOS ACCOMPLISHED, AT LEAST FOR THE MOMENT, ITS STATED GOALS OF REDUCING LIQUIDITY, GAINING SOME CONTROL OVER THE MONEY SUPPLY, AND REDUCING INFLATION. UNSTATED BUT OBVIOUS GOALS SUCH AS UNDERMINING THE FINANCIAL STABILITY OF THE MAJOR OPPOSITION PARTIES AND THE SPLA WERE ALSO SERVED.

14. AT THE SAME TIME, DUE TO A SERIES OF ERRORS AND MISCALCULATIONS, THE CURRENCY CHANGE BROUGHT THE ECONOMY TO A SCREECHING HALT AND ADVERSELY IMPACTED VIRTUALLY EVERY SUDANESE. HOWEVER, AGAIN SHOWING THEIR TENDENCY TO SHRINK TO ANY OCCASION, THE SUDANESE LINED UP DAY AFTER DAY AT BANKS AROUND THE COUNTRY TO TURN IN THEIR CASH FOR PARTIAL PAYMENT AND PROMISES. QUEUES WERE GENERALLY DISCIPLINED AND WITHOUT INCIDENT; IN SEVERAL CASES SOLDIERS ACTUALLY MARCHED THE CIVILIAN POPULATION IN MILITARY LIKE FORMATION TO THE BANKS.

15. OPPOSITION TO THE GOVERNMENT, WHILE WIDESPREAD AND INCREASINGLY VOCAL, REMAINS FRAGMENTED AND TOTALLY UNORGANIZED. ALMOST ALL POTENTIAL LEADERSHIP IS OUTSIDE THE COUNTRY. THE FEW FORMER POLITICAL PARTY LEADERS STILL IN KHARTOUM ARE SO DISCREDITED THEY POSE LITTLE THREAT TO THE GOVERNMENT. TRADITIONAL INSTITUTIONS OF REGIME MAINTENANCE SUCH AS THE MILITARY, POLICE, AND BUREAUCRACY ARE UNDOUBTEDLY DISENCHANTED WITH THE GOVERNMENT, BUT THEY ARE SO THOROUGHLY INFILTRATED WITH LOYAL SECURITY PERSONNEL AND NIF INFORMANTS THAT THERE IS LITTLE POSSIBILITY

THEY COULD MOUNT ANY EFFECTIVE OPPOSITION.

¶6. ONLY THE NIF SUPPORTS THE REGIME AND THEY HAVE PROFITED HANDSOMELY FROM THEIR COLLUSION. AS NIF OFFICIALS ARE QUICK TO POINT OUT, THEY WERE THE ONLY PARTY IN OPPOSITION WHEN BASHIR TOOK OVER IN JUNE 1989. CONSEQUENTLY THEY WERE THE LOGICAL CHOICE TO ASSIST THE NEW GOVERNMENT. (FYI: SEVERAL SUDANESE STILL CLAIM, WITHOUT EVIDENT PROOF, THAT THE COUP WAS ENGINEERED BY THE NIF TO THWART SADIQ AL MAHDI'S PEACE EFFORTS. END FYI.) NIF MEMBERS OR SYMPATHIZERS NOW OCCUPY KEY POSITIONS IN THE BUREAUCRACY, MEDIA, LABOR, ACADEMIA, JUDICIARY, MILITARY, AND SECURITY ORGANIZATIONS. BASHIR'S GOVERNMENT HAS ADOPTED ALMOST EVERY MAJOR NIP POLICY FROM FEDERALISM, AND ISLAMICIZATION OF EDUCATION TO THE RECENT ADOPTION OF OF A NEW PENAL CODE TAKEN DIRECTLY FROM TURABI'S 1988 PROPOSAL AND IMPLEMENTATION OF SHARIA. LONG A POWERFUL FORCE IN BANKING AND THE PRIVATE SECTOR, THEY NOW CONTROL WHATEVER PROFITABLE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY TAKES PLACE IN SUDAN. NIF MEMBERS WERE VIRTUALLY UNAFFECTED BY THE CURRENCY CHANGE; HAVING BEEN FOREWARNED, THEY TURNED THEIR CASH INTO GOLD, COMMODITIES, OR HARD CURRENCY PRIOR TO THE CHANGE. THE NIP, HOWEVER, IS NOT A MONOLITH AND SOME MEMBERS EXERCISE GREATER INFLUENCE THAN OTHERS.

¶7. ONLY LIBYA JARS THE RCC-NIP EQUILIBRIUM. QADHAFI HAS CRITICIZED BASHIR FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF SHARIA AND THE MIXING OF RELIGION AND POLITICS, TWO KEY NIF POLICIES. LIBYA HAS ALSO MOVED DECISIVELY AGAINST FUNDAMENTALISTS AT HOME, AND LIBYAN RECONCILIATION WITH EGYPT, OFTEN CITED BY NIF MEMBERS AS THEIR ARCHENEMY, MITIGATE AGAINST NIP INFLUENCE. MOST BELIEVE ONLY LIBYAN INFLUENCE KEEPS BASHIR FROM DECLARING SUDAN AN ISLAMIC REPUBLIC. THE NIF SEEMS TO BE BANKING ON SUDAN'S EMERGING RELATIONSHIP WITH IRAN TO COUNTER LIBYAN INFLUENCE, WHICH IS BASED PRIMARILY ON GOS DEPENDENCE FOR BOTH OIL AND ARMS. ALTHOUGH THE IRANISANS ARE ASSERTING THEMSELVES IN CULTURAL, EDUCATIONAL, AND RELIGIOUS AREAS (ALL EXCLUSIVELY NIF SPHERES), THEY HAVE YET TO COMPETE WITH THE LIBYANS IN SUPPLYING OIL OR ARMS.

¶8. COMMENT: CONFLICT CONTINUES WITHIN THE RCC BETWEEN THOSE MEMBERS WHO STRONGLY FAVOR NIP POLICIES AND THOSE WHO PREFER A MORE SECULAR STATE. TWO RCC MEMBERS WERE RECENTLY DISMISSED (OR RESIGNED DEPENDING ON WHOM YOU CONSULT) FOR THEIR DISSENTING OPINIONS. THE THREE SOUTHERNERS AND OTHER MODERATES APPEAR TO HAVE LITTLE IF ANY INFLUENCE, LEADING MOST OBSERVERS TO CONCLUDE THAT TURABI AND THE NIF, OPERATING IN A POLITICAL VACUUM, CONTROL THE GOVERNMENT COMPLETELY. NIF INFLUENCE IS CERTAINLY GREAT, BUT BASHIR SEEMS STILL IN CONTROL. BECAUSE HE IS A PROPONENT OF NIP POLICIES, IT IS UNCLEAR WHETHER OR NOT HE IS HIS OWN MAN, AS TINY ROWLAND SUGGESTS. UNTIL HE AND TURABI COME INTO CONFLICT IT WILL BE IMPOSSIBLE TO DETERMINE HOW MUCH POWER TURABI ACTUALLY WIELDS. HOWEVER, AS LONG AS BASHIR AND TURABI AGREE ON THE AGENDA FOR THE GOS, CONFLICT BETWEEN THEM OVER A MAJOR SUBSTANTIVE, POLICY ISSUE IS UNLIKELY.

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